

Frankly, go with Long on Capitol tour

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For a man who'd only started work four days ago, he sure knew his stuff.

I am referring to Frank Long, the volunteer guide who showed me around the newly renovated Utah State Capitol this past Friday.

"I'm Frank Long," he said, stretching out his hand. "I tell people I have a long last name and I'm always Frank."

I had a pretty good idea we would get along.

My guess is that Frank gets along with pretty much everyone.

He volunteered to be a Capitol tour guide during last week's open house because (a) he's retired and (b) he's retired. He also is interested in history. "And if anybody's even a little bit interested in history they've got to like this place," he said, looking around at the freshly scrubbed walls and marble, interspersed by the occasional feverishly working workmen.

Ostensibly, the building was finished when they started inviting the public a week and a half ago. "But they've got a punch list a mile long," said Frank.

Throngs of Utahns have been milling through the building to see what \$250 million buys these days. The shame of it, said Frank, is they can't see what most of the money bought. That would be the 265 columns placed under the building to retrofit it for earthquakes.

"They aren't cheap," said Frank. "I think that's where about \$200 million went right there." In other areas, though, the refurbishing was a genuine bargain. Frank pointed out that many of the new desks and bookcases in the legislative offices were made by inmates at the Utah State Prison.

Call it hardwood labor.

And Frank noted that the inmate population also showed up in force to help move offices and equipment back into the Capitol and to do a lot of the cleanup work.

I waited for Frank to make a crack about it being the largest group of crooks in the building since the last time the Legislature assembled, but Frank is not that kind of person.

He is the kind of person who pointed out the eight gargoyles positioned on either side of the rotunda.

"For years nobody knew they were there," he said. "They were covered in dust." The gargoyles have the head and body of a lion, the tail of a fish and wings of an eagle. If they could shoot, the Jazz would draft them.

"In the old buildings they put them up to protect the building," said Frank. And they do seem to be working.

Frank said the gargoyles will eventually be joined by the stately lions that used to sit perched on the east and west entrances, and by the statue of the Indian, Massasoit, at the south entrance. At this point those historic structures are still part of that milelong punch list.

Frank knew the names of the lions. The ones on the west are Fortitude and Courage and the ones on the east are Integrity and the aptly named Patience.

"There is a lot of symbolism in this building," noted Frank, who then added this non sequitur. "It's also interesting how few bathrooms there are — and for some reason they're all on the south side."

It would be great if everyone could see the new Capitol with Frank. I found him the most interesting, and friendly, part of the tour.